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Public Hearing – 2/16/16  
Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget

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Good afternoon,

I am urging you on behalf of all the families at Moriarty Environmental Magnet School, Wequonnoc, and Veterans Elementary Schools in Norwich to not cut funding to the **Family School Connection Program (FSC)**. Family School Connection (FSC) is a prevention program funded by the Connecticut Children's Trust Fund, a division of the Department of Social Services. The program provides comprehensive home visiting and support services for high risk families whose children are frequently absent, truant, have academic or behavior problems, or often come to school unprepared. In addition, the program provides services to parents who are not adequately engaged with the school or attending to their child's educational needs. It also helps parents increase their knowledge of parenting and child development, helps parents develop social connections, increase concrete supports and develop parental resilience. Since inception, FSC has helped over 100 families, which include 142 parents and 165 children. Studies have shown that children who are not getting their needs met are at greater risk for developmental, behavioral and health issues – issues that too often lead to school failure.

Eighty five percent of children entering the program are between the ages of four to nine. Families are predominantly single-mother, grandmother, or cohabiting female-headed households with children. Families have limited education, high rates of unemployment and few resources. More than one-third of parents have less than a high school education. More than ninety percent of parents in program score significant risk for dysfunctional parenting.

The FSC program at Madonna Place has provided parent support and education services to 59 parents and over 83 children in the past year. As the Clinical Supervisor, I have witnessed first-hand the effectiveness of our home visiting program and the overwhelming challenges that our families encounter on a daily basis. The programs Home Visitor(s) assist parents with setting and reaching attainable goals. They also help families transition from crisis situations to becoming a strong, nurturing family that supports their children's, growth and development and success in school. All of our parents want their children to succeed in school but they need our help to develop parenting skills and to address family stresses and challenges that include health and behavioral issues, economic hardships, social isolation, low self-esteem, potential for violence and more. Many of our parents are breaking a cycle of abuse. When families have high levels of stress it makes a difference when they receive additional support and education. The following services are provided to families:

- **Parent education** which includes child development, nurturing and attachment; stress management; budgeting and crisis intervention strategies.

- **Parent school connections** which includes attending meeting with parents at the school; increasing parents comfort level in communicating with their child's teacher; connecting families to support programs in the school such as Bridges, Family Resource Center, School Governance Council, PTO and Pre-K programs; helping parents connect to adult education and ESL services, helping parents obtain school uniforms and effective homework strategies.
- **Positive Parenting Program Intervention (Triple P)** which is designed to give parents the skills needed to raise confident, healthy children and to build stronger family relationships. Triple P provides parents with simple and practical strategies they can adapt to suit their own values, beliefs and needs. The benefits can be dramatic and long-lasting. Triple P draws on social learning, cognitive behavioral and developmental theory as well as research into risk factors associated with the development of social and behavioral problems in children. It aims to equip parents with the skills and confidence they need to be self-sufficient and to be able to manage family issues without ongoing support.
- **Case Management** which includes supports to maintain quality of life, housing, food, clothing, utilities, child care, transportation, behavioral and dental health services and employment.

Cutting funding to this program will leave families without the support they need to increase their coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively. It also will affect children's ability to be successful in school. Children are most successful when parents are involved in their children's education. The **Family School Connection Program** works to help parents meet their quality of life needs so they can be more involved with their children's educational needs. This program has been very impactful to school staff as well as helping parents and children. Please consider maintaining the funding for the **Family School Connection Program**.

**Why invest in this program? Prevention Works, Prevention Saves and it's an Investment in our Future.**

**I am opposed to the Governor's proposed generic Agency Operations Budgeting. We need line item budgeting. CT residents deserve transparency.**